THE VISION OF SAINT AGNES' EVE

MARIE E. J. HOBART

Class 244.7 Book H651
General Theological Seminary Library
Chelsea Square, New York

Purchased from the fund bequeathed to the Seminary by
EUGENE AUGUSTUS HOFFMAN, D. D.
DEAN 1879-1902

hayre

0/=

THE VISION OF
SAINT AGNES' EVE

THE SAINT AGNES MYSTERY PLAYS

LADY CATECHISM AND THE CHILD.

THE LITTLE PILGRIMS AND THE BOOK BELOVED.

THE VISION OF SAINT AGNES' EVE.

THE PARISH RECORDS

THE VISION OF SAINT AGNES' EVE

A MYSTERY PLAY

BY

MARIE E. J. HOBART

O blest communion, fellowship divine!
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine;
Yet all are one in Thee, for all are Thine.
Alleluia.

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
91 AND 93 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK
LONDON, BOMBAY, AND CALCUTTA
MCMVII

244.7
H651

44161

Written for the Children of Saint Agnes' Chapel,
Trinity Parish, and presented by them for
the Eve of Saint Agnes, 1907

COPYRIGHT, 1907, BY
MARIE E. J. HOBART

Dedicated to

Elizabeth

Of the Church Expectant

THE VISION OF SAINT AGNES' EVE

Time — The Eve of Saint Agnes

Place — A Quiet Oratory in the Tower of Saint Agnes' Chapel

Characters in the Play

SAINT AGNES — Virgin and Martyr

ANCILLA — Her Attendant

PEACE
JOY
INNOCENT
FAITHFUL
} Children of Saint Agnes' Chapel

What they saw through an Eastern Window

A SHEPHERD BOY OF LONG AGO — Who believed God's First Promise to the Church

JUDITH — Of the Church in the Wilderness

THE MARTYRS OF THE DAWN

A LITTLE LAD — Who saw the Sunrise

THE BELOVED PERSIS — Who welcomed the Church to Greece

BLANDINA — Of the Persecuted Church

PANCRAS — Who saw the Church hiding in the Catacombs

BENAN — Who helped to plant the Church in Scotia

QUEEN BERTHA — Who brought the Church into Kent

AIDAN OF IONA — Who established the Church in Northumbria

A LITTLE MAID — Who lived when it was dark, and did her best

A BOY KING — Who loved his Mother Church

LADY MARY — Who prayed for the Peace of Jerusalem

MAID MARGARET — Who welcomed the Church to New York

AN AMERICAN BOY — Who was a Churchman and a Patriot

TWO ANGELS — Keepers of the Veil

THE STANDARD BEARERS OF THE CHURCH EXPECTANT

THE STANDARD BEARERS OF THE CHURCH MILITANT

A CRUCIFER

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. The Parish Records
2. "They had such lovely flowers, and I had only this"
3. Judith of the Wilderness
4. "We, being many, are one body in Christ"

THE VISION OF
SAINT AGNES' EVE

THE VISION OF SAINT AGNES' EVE

—

SCENE

A LITTLE ROOM IN THE TOWER. AT THE BACK OF THE STAGE THE LARGE EASTERN WINDOW. TO THE RIGHT SMALLER WINDOWS WITH PIGEONS IN THEM. TO THE LEFT A PRIE-DIEU WITH A CROSS HANGING OVER IT, AND A TABLE ON WHICH IS PILED A SET OF LARGE RED BOOKS. IN THE FOREGROUND A CHAIR WITH A LITTLE STAND BESIDE IT, AND OPPOSITE THIS A LOW WOODEN BENCH.

—

A little while before the Play begins the Two Angels enter. They seat themselves, one on the right corner of the stage and the other on the left corner.

Music, "For all the saints, who from their labors rest." Enter Saint Agnes and Ancilla.

St. Agnes.— What is the hour, Ancilla?

Ancilla.— Since Evensong was said in the Church below, the sun hath sunk behind the River, and darkness fallen upon the City. Haply it lacks three hours yet of midnight.

St. Agnes.— Is it indeed so late? I have been intent on thoughts of my dear people, and the time hath quickly sped. Well, let us pass the hours that yet remain here in this quiet room. If I am needed, I may here be found; and if not needed, what better place for thought and prayer? The great City with all its sin and sorrow lies beneath us, and the starry sky above draws our souls to God.

Ancilla.— (goes to the window and looks out) Verily we are suspended

between the earth and sky! (Looking around.) A sweet and peaceful little room. These gentle doves find a safe shelter here; and see, Saint Agnes, (pointing to a nest in the corner of the window) the swallow hath made her a nest where she may lay her young.

St. Agnes. — Most happy swallow! So may the mothers of this Congregation make nests for their little ones in the safe shelter of Holy Church. (She seats herself.)

Ancilla. — (passes around the room and comes to the red books) And what are these?

St. Agnes. — Those are the Parish Records.

Ancilla. — What a strange place to keep them!

St. Agnes. — Yes, if they were for the eye of flesh, but these are the

spirit records. They are kept for the guardian angels of the people, and for me, and for all that cloud of witnesses that compasseth about the children of men to see whether they run with patience the race that is set before them.

Ancilla. — Is it indeed so? Who keeps them then, sweet Saint?

St. Agnes. — The people themselves keep them, although they know it not. Each day the records grow, and some are fair, and some are not so fair but that I could wish them fairer. . . . Bring me the children's book, Ancilla.

Ancilla. — (takes up the first book and reads the title) Record of the Sowing of the Seed and its

Various Fruit. What book is this?

St. Agnes. — That is a record of the weekly preaching of the word, and of the fruit it bears in each life in this Congregation.

Ancilla. — And does this record please thee?

St. Agnes. — The sowing of the seed hath ever been the same. Some hearts are hard and some are shallow and some are full of weeds, but thanks be to God, some are good and bring forth fruit an hundredfold. Yet, that is not the record I would see to-night; lay it aside.

Ancilla. — (lays aside the first book and takes up the second) A Record of the Thoughts of the People during Divine Service.

St. Agnes. — Would that my people ever remembered that their thoughts are open to God, their desires known to Him, and that from Him no secrets are hid!

Ancilla. — (with some warmth) It is passing strange if they forget this. Why, they do rehearse it in their prayers each Sunday.

St. Agnes. — Ah Ancilla, before we were delivered from the burden of the flesh, did our knowledge never surpass our performance?

Ancilla. — (with contrition) Aye, verily it did! Thy words have pricked my memory. How glad I am, Saint Agnes, that I was committed to thy faithful care!

St. Agnes. — And I too am glad, my Ancilla, for in loving service to the little ones committed to my care can

I best show mine own deep thankfulness for what I have been taught in Paradise and for what I still shall learn.

Ancilla.— (returns to the table, lays aside the second book and takes up the third) Record of the Offerings of the people and of the Proportion which they bear to what is spent on Themselves.

St. Agnes.— That throws wondrous light on the progress of each Christian life, but my time for examining that record is Quinquagesima,[1] so lay it aside with the others, and proceed.

Ancilla.— (lays aside the third book and takes up another) The Book of the Children.

[1] At St. Agnes' Chapel the annual Thank Offering of the Congregation for the Missionary Work of the Church is made on Quinquagesima Sunday.

St. Agnes.— (stretching out her hand) Ah! That is the record I would see to-night. (She opens the book and reads.) Record of births. (Runs her finger down the page.) Welcome, sweet little ones! I thank God for your creation. Record of Baptisms. They are all here. Christ keep them His faithful soldiers and servants unto their life's end! (Looks up suddenly and listens.) Didst thou hear footsteps?

Ancilla.— Nay, I heard nothing.

St. Agnes.— (reading from the book) The names of those children who can perfectly recite their Catechism. Ah! that is good, still I could wish there were some names here which I do not find. (Turns the page.) Names

of those children who are trying each day to keep their baptismal vow. (Eagerly.) Ah! Peace, Joy, Innocent, Faithful. God keep you, my true-hearted little ones! (A knocking is heard.) Surely thou hearest now, Ancilla?

Ancilla.— Yes, some one knocks. I will run and see. (She runs to the door and looks down, then returns, speaking joyfully.) There are some little children here from thy Chapel who would fain see thee.

St. Agnes.— Bid them come up.

Ancilla.— (calling) Come up, dear children, be mindful of the steps.

Enter Peace, Joy, Innocent.

The Three Children.—Greeting, Saint Agnes!

St. Agnes.— The Lord be with you!

The Three Children.—And with thee, Saint Agnes.

Joy.— (advancing and presenting her roses) I bring thee roses because the rose means beauty, and thou dost teach us the beauty of holiness.

St. Agnes.— (taking the roses) That thou may'st be evermore adorned with that same beauty is my heart's true wish for thee.

Innocent.— (presenting his flowers) I bring thee lilies because thou art our Lily-Maid.

St. Agnes.— Keep thy heart as pure as thy fair lilies, sweet Innocent, for so shalt thou see God.

Peace.— (presenting her red carnations) I bring thee these crimson flowers because thou didst shed thy blood for Christ.

St. Agnes.— Who shed His precious blood for me — and thee.

Innocent.— Saint Agnes, may I stroke thy little lamb?

St. Agnes.— Hast thou remembered what I told thee?

Innocent.— Yes, Saint Agnes; I must be first pure, then peaceable.

St. Agnes.— And hast thou minded to be so?

Innocent.— (hesitating) It is quite hard to be always peaceable.

St. Agnes.— But thou must endure hardness, for thou art a soldier of Jesus Christ.

Innocent.— So I do try, indeed. Yesterday a boy at school hit me, and I was about to hit back, (doubling up his fist) when, Saint Agnes, I thought of thee.

St. Agnes.— And what didst thou do when thou thoughtest upon me?

Innocent.— (suiting the action to the words) I put my fist into my pocket and held it so until mine anger was gone from me.

St. Agnes.— Then art thou a brave soldier of Christ, and thou shalt have my lamb, (giving it to him) for thou like it art pure and peaceable. Now come, mine other little lambs, and let me see how best I may this night entertain such welcome guests.

For some time Peace has been standing in the middle of the stage with an uncertain and troubled expression.

St. Agnes.— What is it, Peace?

Peace.— Saint Agnes, I do bethink me—

St. Agnes.— Of what dost thou bethink thee, my child?

Peace.— When we were below, waiting for thy permission to come to thee, there were four of us, and

now only three are here. I do not know —

St. Agnes. — Ancilla, go and bring up the other child. (Exit Ancilla.) (To Peace.) And why did he stay behind?

Peace. — I hardly know — he was poorly dressed, and he had no flowers to give thee.

St. Agnes. — Why didst thou not encourage him to come?

Peace. — I — I — I did say "Come."

Joy. — Yes, Saint Agnes, I too said "Come."

St. Agnes. — Another time, my children, when ye say "Come" put your arm about the timorous one and say, "Come with me."

Enter Ancilla.

Ancilla. — I cannot find him, Saint Agnes; the porch is dark and

empty, and I see no one in the lonely street.

St. Agnes.— (rising) Then I must go and find him myself. Fetch me a lantern, Ancilla. (Exit Ancilla. St. Agnes walks to the front of the stage.) And art thou poor, my timid little one? Poor? Please God thou shalt this night learn that thou art a citizen of no mean city! Poor? Thou Child of God, thou inheritor of the Kingdom that shall have no end! O Paradise, thou land of far distances, how strange would sound in thy bright air this earthly talk of rich and poor!

Enter Ancilla with a lantern.

Ancilla.— Here is a light.

St. Agnes.— (takes the lantern and wraps her cloak about her) Commend my quest to God.

Ancilla.— I will not fail thee. (Exit St. Agnes.) (To the children.) Let us pray that Saint Agnes may find her little one.

Ancilla and the children kneel. Music, "Lead, Kindly Light."
When the music ceases the children rise, and at the same instant St. Agnes enters with Faithful leaning on her arm. Faithful is lame, and walks with a crutch. He is poorly clad.

Ancilla.— Saint Agnes hath found her little one.

The Children.— Thanks be to God!

Faithful.— Oh, no, Saint Agnes, I was not afraid of thee, but — these — (pointing shyly to the other children) they had such lovely flowers, and I had only this.

(He holds towards her a sprig of evergreen.)

St. Agnes.— (taking the evergreen and fastening it in her robe) Thy gift is kindred to the flowers of Paradise, for it will never fade. (To the three Children.) Come, and welcome your brother.

The Three Children.—Welcome, dear Faithful.

Peace.— (gently withdrawing the crutch) Let me be thy crutch.

The four children seat themselves.

St. Agnes.— Now are we happy all. How then shall we employ this fair hour which God hath given us together?

Joy.— Saint Agnes, I have a little brother in Paradise, if thou couldst tell me ought of him —

St. Agnes. — Thy brother is well and happy, but Ancilla shall tell thee. (To Ancilla.) Saw I thee not with the little Felix this morning after the Hymn of Praise?

Ancilla. — Yes, Felix and I were playing with other children by the River of Life, while we waited for the coming of the Blessed Virgin.

Joy. — (eagerly) And what did you and Felix do when the Blessed Virgin came?

Ancilla. — We all gathered around her, and she told us of the Holy Child and of the home in Nazareth: and because Felix was far from his own mother, she took him in her arms and held him against her breast.

Joy.— O happy Felix! I will tell my mother this, and I think she will weep no more such bitter tears.

Faithful.— Saint Agnes, hast thou seen my father?

St. Agnes.— I see him very often. He loves thee tenderly, and prays for thee, and often talks about his only little son.

Faithful.— Wilt thou tell him that I remember him, and that I try to be my mother's comfort as he bade me?

St. Agnes.— Such news of thee will make even Paradise more radiant for thy father.

Peace.— Saint Agnes, I too have a friend in Paradise.

St. Agnes.— I know thy friend. She is the good old nurse who cared

for thee when thou wast a baby. She often speaks of her nursling, and awaits God's good pleasure to see thee again.

Peace. — I pray thee tell her that I still say the grace she taught me before each meal, and that I remember to sew for the poor as I used to do with her.

St. Agnes. — I will not fail to gladden her heart with thy message. . . . But Innocent, hast thou no friend in Paradise of whom thou wouldst hear tidings?

Innocent. — (who has been playing with the lamb, looks up) No, Saint Agnes, all my friends are in this world.

St. Agnes. — (stroking his hair) Dear Heart! And yet there are beyond the

veil many who love thee because thou art Christ's little one. (Turning to the other children.) All those who have departed hence in the Lord are your kindred, for we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Do ye believe this, and do ye ponder it in your hearts?

Faithful. — Truly I do know that we are all members of the mystical body of Christ, which is the blessed company of all faithful people, and I know that Holy Church bids us follow the blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, but, Saint Agnes, they are so far away.

St. Agnes. — In the Father's house are many mansions: ye are in

one mansion; they are in others, but all are under the sheltering eaves of the Father's love.

Peace. — Yes, but, Saint Agnes, we know not what they do or say or think.

St. Agnes. — Ye know that all God's servants departed this life in His faith and fear do now rest from their labours and are in joy and felicity. And ye know that they are with Christ, Who, Himself hanging on the Cross, said to a passing soul, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

Faithful. — Verily we know more than I thought, and yet we would fain know more and more.

St. Agnes. — There are many things to tell you, but ye could not bear

them now, for now ye see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now ye *can* know only in part, but then shall ye know even as ye are known.

Joy.— (with a sigh of disappointment) Then must we have faith.

St. Agnes.— Yes, but ye must add to your faith knowledge, for how shall ye believe in things of which ye have not heard? (Pauses a moment in thought, then looks up suddenly.) Let me, therefore, to-night show you some of these same blessed saints, not as they are now, for ye have not the eyes to see them so, but as they were on earth when they too ran the race that was set before them.

Ancilla, open for us the Eastern Window, that we may look out with the eyes of faith, across sea and land and down the long procession of the years. To begin with, let us think of him who believed God's first promise to the Church, righteous Abel, first of all the saints to enter Paradise.

Music, " *My faith looks up to Thee,*
Thou Lamb of Calvary."

Ancilla throws open the window. Abel is seen kneeling in prayer before an altar of stones from which ascends a column of smoke. When the music ceases, Abel rises from his knees.

Abel. — (gazing at the ascending smoke) The smoke ascends to Heaven. Oh, if I, a breath, could also ascend and be accepted of God as is my sac-

rifice! And yet, am I not accepted through this sacrifice? Hath not God appointed a sin-offering which lieth at our door? Thy blood, my gentle yearling lamb, is poured out for our sin of disobedience, and yet thou hast no sin: how can that be? "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Thus spake the Lord God unto that slimy worm. O Seed of woman, art Thou far or near? Doth this blood point to Thy bruised heel, and wilt Thou crush the head of him who worked our woe? Such is my hope. Sometimes in the long, dark hours of the night a terror

seizes Eve and me. Each rustling leaf seems the hiss of that dread Serpent. My mother draws me to her bosom, and trembling we await the dawn. Then — the bright glory of the rising sun dispels the gloom, and we are safe and almost happy. So now it is night in our souls. My mother's tears fall like the rain. The heavy weight of God's displeasure bears us down, and we are faint with longing for the odorous breath of Eden and those sweet walks with God in the cool of the happy day. But dry thy tears, poor Eve. The effulgence of a brighter sun shall rise upon this night. O yes, Thou promised Seed, Thou shalt one day make our peace with

God, and take away this stain of sin. The smoke ascends to Heaven, and I take courage and say to my young heart, "Exiled, but not lost."

Ancilla closes the window.

St. Agnes. — Ye see here that by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, and by that faith he, being dead, yet speaketh. I purpose now to show you one of those who by faith forsook Egypt, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; for she saw Him Who is invisible. Ancilla, open once more the casement, that we may behold young Judith of the Wilderness.

Music. "*Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,*
Pilgrim through this barren land."

Ancilla opens the window. Judith is seen gathering manna.

Judith. — (letting fall into her basket a handful of the manna) Now have I two omers gathered, and I must bake what I would bake to-day, and seethe what I would seethe, and lay by what I would keep until the morning, for to-morrow is the rest of the Holy Sabbath.

How wonderful is this great Wilderness! See how it stretches out into the immeasurable spaces! There, hidden by morning mists, lies Rephidim, where, under valiant Joshua, Israel fought Amalek and prevailed. There tower

the awful heights of Sinai, whence we received the Law: and there, on that black spot, stood the golden Calf. But God was so merciful that He forgave our misdeeds, and destroyed us not. There lies the camp of Israel: they are more in number than the sands of the sea. And there (making an obeisance) the glory of the Lord appeareth in a cloud. Oh, the wonder of it all! Less than seven months ago we were in bitter bondage in Egypt, groaning under the lash's torture,—and now, free! fed with this bread from Heaven, this food of the mighty! How holy it seems, pledge of the goodness of Him who brought us out of loathed Egypt! Ah that morning

when we saw them dead upon the seashore! The desert wind brings me again the song of Miriam's maidens: "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."

Oh that the children of Israel might put their trust in God: that they would remember that He is their strength and that the high God is their Redeemer! Marvellous things hath He done in their sight! (With growing enthusiasm.) He divided the sea and let us go through: he made the waters to stand on an heap. In the daytime He leads us with a cloud, and all the night through with a light of fire. He clave the hard rock in the

wilderness to give us drink. (She strikes her timbrel.)

"Who, who among the nations' gods is like to Thee, O Lord?
Thou hast made bare Thy great right arm, made bare Thy mighty sword.
As strong to smite, so strong to save, Thou givest victory;
And never were they put to shame who trusted, Lord, in Thee.

"We praise Thee, we exalt Thee, we magnify Thy name;
Strong in the might of truth and right, Thy promised aid we claim.
Some put their trust in chariots, in horsemen strong and brave;
But we will call on Thy great name, and Thou wilt hear and save."

Ancilla closes the window.

St. Agnes. — Ye see by this how God led His Church through the wilderness. Now the time would fail me to show you all the saints of old, who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises. But God had provided something better for His Church, and when the fulness of the time was come,

"THEY HAD SUCH LOVELY FLOWERS, AND I HAD ONLY THIS"

sent forth His Son. Tell me, children, when was the dawn of that bright day?

The Four Children.—

"When Christ was born of pure Marie,
In Bethlehem, in that fair citie,
The Angels sang with mirth and glee;
In excelsis Gloria."

St. Agnes.— Behold then the Martyrs of the Dawn, those babes of Bethlehem who glorified God by their death.

Music, "Silent Night, Holy Night."
Ancilla opens the window. The Holy Innocents are seen, crowned with white flowers, and bearing palms.

Peace.— Oh, the sweet Innocents!

Joy.— Saint Agnes, I wish that we might speak to them.

St. Agnes.— For that very cause do I show them to you, that ye may have with them such mystic

sweet communion as shall increase your knowledge and confirm your faith.

Joy. —

"Say, do you pass the happy hours by softly flowing streams
On whose fair banks grow strange bright flowers, such as one sees in dreams?
The lovely flowers of Paradise, whose fragrance is so sweet
Because the meadows where they blow are pressed by Jesus' feet?"

Faithful. —

"That blessed land seems far and strange, how fair soe'er it be,
And that new heavenly life of yours is veiled in mystery;
So tell us of the life of heaven, and what heaven's children do,
And tell us what's the sweetest thing in all sweet heaven to you."

The Holy Innocents. —

"We pass the holy, happy hours in doing Jesus' will,
We fly where e'er He bids go His errands to fulfil.
And when our happy task is done, to us is given the grace
To see the sweetest thing in heaven, the smile on Jesus' face."

Ancilla closes the window.

Faithful. — Saint Agnes, did these little ones ever see the Holy Child in Bethlehem?

St. Agnes.— Not to know Him, for they were of such tender age.

Faithful.— I should like so much to see a boy who had seen our blessed Lord.

St. Agnes.— Then I will show you such an one, a little lad like thyself, who saw the sunrise of the Church, and stood in its glorious rays.

Music, "Jesus calls us, o'er the tumult
Of our life's wild, restless sea."

St. Agnes motions to Ancilla, who throws open the window.
A little lad is seen carrying a basket of small loaves and two little fishes.

St. Agnes.— Thou little lad of Galilee, tell these children, I pray thee, what was the happiest day of thy life.

The Little Lad.—That I will gladly do. It was a day that I went with Andrew, our neighbour, across the Lake to hear Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth, preach the word of the Kingdom. I had two little fishes that I had caught myself, as I have to-day, and five small barley loaves that my mother had baked for me, but I forgot to eat in listening to the gracious words of Jesus, and seeing the wonders that He did. Then Andrew came to me and said, "Wilt thou give thy loaves and thy little fish to the Master?" And so I did, and when He took them into His hands, He smiled on me. That was the happiest day of my life. (Leaning towards the children and

speaking persuasively.) Have ye nothing to give Him?

Ancilla closes the window.

St. Agnes.— Have ye nothing to give Him?

Joy.— Saint Agnes, I have a round gold piece as big as that (making a circle with her thumb and finger) which my godfather gave me on my birthday, — could I give that to our Lord?

St. Agnes.— "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto me." If thou knowest a poor person, give it to him in the name of Christ. If not, let Holy Church be thine almoner.

Peace.— Saint Agnes, I have no gold, but I have some skill in

needlework, — could I give Him garments of my making?

St. Agnes. — "I was naked, and ye clothed me."

Innocent. — Saint Agnes, I am learning to sing in the choir, — would Christ accept my song?

St. Agnes. — Yes, since out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God hath ordained strength.

During this time Faithful has been standing apart and looking very sad. Saint Agnes, seeing this, rises and goes to him.

St. Agnes. — And what wilt thou give to thy Lord?

Faithful. — (sadly) I have nothing to give Him, and yet I love Him as much as these (pointing to the other children).

St. Agnes. — Is thy love nothing to Him?

Faithful. — Yes, Saint Agnes, but love ever craves an offering. I want something of mine own to give Him. I want some way to show my love.

St. Agnes. — (tenderly and solemnly) Then offer to Him thy cross.

Faithful. — (looks up wondering) My cross! Have I a cross, Saint Agnes?

St. Agnes. — Hast never seen thy cross? Then let me show thee how wondrous fair it is.

She opens his patched and faded blouse, and draws out a jewelled cross which hangs by a chain against his breast.

Faithful. — (with astonishment) How beautiful!

During this time Ancilla has drawn near.

Ancilla. — O children, come, see!

The children gather about Faithful.

The Children. — Oh, how beautiful!

Peace. — Where didst thou get it, Faithful?

Faithful. — Truly, I know not. Where did I get it, Saint Agnes?

St. Agnes. — Thy Lord, who bore the Cross for thee, gave thee this cross to bear for Him. (Turning to the children.) Children, when Faithful was born the Lord let him be lame. He can never run and leap and dance as ye do in your happy play, but he hath borne his cross so well that now it gleams with the jewels of Faith and Patience and Love.

Ancilla. — Dear Faithful, thou hast the best gift of all.

St. Agnes. — But see, the time is passing, and I have much more to show

you. (They all seat themselves.) We must now see how Holy Church, the Sun being risen upon her, went forth to make disciples of all nations. Let me, therefore, show you one who welcomed Holy Church to Greece.

Music.— *"O Sion haste, thy mission high fulfilling,*
To tell to all the world that God is Light."

St. Agnes motions to Ancilla, who throws open the window. Persis is seen.

St. Agnes.— Beloved Persis, who hast laboured much in the Lord, I pray thee of thy courtesy to tell us how thou wast called to be a saint.

Persis.— Ye must know, sweet lady and fair children, that I am only a sojourner in Rome, as are also

many of my countrymen, but my home is in beautiful Greece. There, in my native city, saw I Paul, and was by his dear voice called to be a saint. It was on this wise: I walked one day through the pleasant streets of Corinth, and sat to rest by one of the fountains that draw their sweet, clear water from Pereine's springs. My heart was heavy because it had been asking me, and not for the first time, a question which I could not answer: "Is there a God, and can He be anything to me?" I looked at the blue waters sparkling in Cenchrea's harbour. They are the highway to all the world, but nowhere in the world is there to be found an answer to my question. I

looked up at the snowy heights of Parnassus: has art or poetry or music a message for the sorrowful heart? Nay, Olympus itself would have for me no balm; for can those fickle, wrangling powers which men call gods and goddesses, and to which they offer their cruel and unclean worship, can they give me any comfort? Shall I say, "Zeus, whoever thou art and by whatever name it please thee to be named, I call on thee and pray?" . . . Nay, if God find not us, how can we find God?

Just then I saw coming down the street from the Athens gate two men, travel-stained, heated with walking, and weary, but there was something in their faces that held my gaze. They

came to the fountain, and I bade my slave draw for them to drink. Then they inquired of me the way to the Jewish Synagogue. I could not answer them, but my slave pointed out the dwelling of some Jewish tent-makers. Then Paul fastened his eyes on me and said, "Whom thou dost seek in thine heart, Him declare I unto thee." So then I heard him preach, and believing on the Lord, I was washed from my sin in the pure water of life. After that I continued many days to learn of Paul at the house of Aquila and Priscilla, and then he laid his hands on me that I might receive the Holy Ghost. Thus was I delivered from the power of darkness and translated into

the kingdom of light. And now I must crave your permission to depart, for I go to the house of Priscilla and Aquila to meet the saints. Last night Phœbe arrived in Rome. She is a deaconess from the Church at home, and she brings with her a letter from Paul which will be read to-night. Oh, how my heart sings at the thought! Perhaps there will even be a message for me. Fare ye well.

Persis passes away and Ancilla closes the window.

Joy.— (eagerly) Saint Agnes, was there a message for her?

St. Agnes.— Ah, Joy, I may not tell thee what thou canst find out for thyself. Thou hast the letter of Paul to the Church at Rome.

Look and see whether there was a greeting for Persis. And now, my little ones, we must follow Holy Church in the Via Dolorosa. The powers of darkness have met the army of light. Let me show you Blandina, a faithful martyr of Christ.

Music. — *"The Son of God goes forth to war."*
Ancilla opens the window. Blandina is seen, sleeping peacefully in her underground dungeon. Her wrists are fastened with chains. Beside her burns a feeble light.
The Children rise when they see her, and stand with clasped hands, and faces full of tender reverence.

St. Agnes.— Blandina, thou prisoner of Jesus Christ!

Blandina. — (awakening) Who calls me by that dear name?

St. Agnes.— We are disciples of thy Lord, who have come to bathe thy wounds with our tears.

Blandina.— Not so, dear friends, for I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed. (She falls into a reverie.) Yesterday Ponticus, my young brother, endured with patience every torture, and with his dying eyes fixed on me, passed to eternal life. And three days ago the blessed Pothinus, our dear Bishop, received his crown, and my own mistress was taken from this persecution, thanking God that I, her slave, had received grace to endure, for she was afraid that I would not witness a

good confession, being only a humble slave. But I know that I shall not fail, for I have put my trust in Christ, who is my strength. There was Attalus of Pergamus, too. I saw him driven round the amphitheatre with a placard about his neck: "This is Attalus, a Christian." To-night he rests in peace. And Sanctus, our brave young deacon,— his sufferings too are over. Truly I think our Church in Lyons hath proved her love for Christ.

St. Agnes.— The glory of the Church of Lyons shines out through all the world. She is a city that is set on an hill and that cannot be hid.

Blandina.— And even poor little frightened Biblis, my fellow slave, who

recanted under torture, — yesterday she confessed Christ, and suffered with Ponticus. So I only am left, and soon I too shall be at peace and see my Lord. If only I do not yield when the Adversary with all his might falls upon me! To-morrow they are to put me in a net and toss me to a wild bull. . . . So be it! I know in whom I have put my trust. Ah, there! A ray of light hath found its way into my dungeon, by which I know the sun hath risen. Poor little earthly flame, (blowing out her light) I need thee no more. O rising sun, emblem of the Resurrection, before thou set this night, I may be in Paradise. (She clasps her hands.) O Lord, in Thee have

I trusted, suffer me not for any pains of death to fall from Thee!

Ancilla closes the window. The Children sit down. Peace and Joy hide their faces in their hands.

Faithful.— Poor Blandina! Her sufferings wring my heart.

St. Agnes.— 'T is only by their sympathy and tears that Christians to-day *can* enter into the sorrows of the persecuted Church; but be comforted, my tender-hearted little ones, all this is passed long since, and to-day, as ye well know, the noble army of martyrs praise God on high. And now, Ancilla, I would turn our thoughts to Rome and see how the Christians do bear themselves on

the banks of yellow Tiber. Let us behold Pancratius, a Roman, Christian boy.

Music, "Hark! the sound of holy voices, Chanting at the crystal sea."

Ancilla opens the window and Pancras is seen. He is reading from a scroll.

St. Agnes.— Hail, Pancratius!

Pancras.— Peace be with thee, most noble Agnes. In what may I serve thee?

St. Agnes.— I have with me these children, who would fain know thee.

Pancras.— Do they understand the sign of the Fish?

St. Agnes.— Ask them and see.

Pancras.— Can ye tell me what a Fish might mean to one who understood?

The Four Children. — (in unison, with hearty earnestness) Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour.

Pancras. — Verily we are all of one heart and mind. Now what may I do for you, my fellow Christians?

Faithful. — If it please thee, Saint Pancras, we would like to hear about the Church in Rome in the days of Diocletian.

Pancras. — Ah then! ye must know that evil days are come upon the Church, not only in Rome, but throughout the world. Diocletian, from his palace in Nicomedia, hath issued an edict against the Christians, and Maximian hath us of the West in his cruel grasp. Our Churches are closed or razed to the ground, our goods are taken from us, we are deprived

of our civic rights. Thousands are tortured, imprisoned, sent to the mines, mutilated, killed, but since ye are Christians, I do not need to tell you that Christ is worth it all. Oh, so well worth all! Before day-break to-morrow we meet to offer Him our sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving.

Peace.— But where will you have your service, Saint Pancras, since your Churches are all closed or destroyed?

Pancras.— Oh, not above ground do we worship now in Rome. Beyond the City there are sand-pits, and beneath them, deep in the heart of earth, we have for many years buried our blessed dead. In these long galleries and crypts and at

these altar tombs we meet for worship. To-morrow we gather in the Cemetery of Callistus. Dionysius, our faithful priest, will break for us the bread of life. Then he is to preach to us and prepare us for the day of trial which we all feel is at hand.

St. Agnes. — I see it all again, — the long, dark galleries, the tablets with the names of those who rest in peace. I see the flaring torches as the faithful approach. I smell the dampness of the earth and the odour of burning pine.

Pancras. — And, Agnes, thou dost not forget Dionysius?

St. Agnes. — How should I forget him who was my faithful pastor upon earth! How much of present

bliss do I not owe to his ministrations!

Pancras. — And I, too, owe him much. He warns me that I must not be rash, for they who court martyrdom may lose its truest joy, which is submission to the will of God. I will try to obey my pastor, but when I hear the African beasts roaring in the vivarium, my heart longs to follow my father, who poured out his life for Christ on the sands of the Flavian Amphitheatre. A spotted pard gave him his crown. Yet I would be obedient and say, "Lord, what wouldst *Thou* have me to do?"

Ancilla closes the window.

St. Agnes. — Thou hadst thy wish, brave Roman boy; on the sands

of the Flavian Amphitheatre a spotted leopard gave thee, too, a crown.

Ye have heard, my children, that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. I will now show you fruit of this precious seed. Ye have seen that there was a great persecution against the Church which was at Lyons. Now they which were scattered abroad upon this persecution travelled northward through Gaul, and, passing across the stormy Channel, found their way into Britain, and into Scotia, which ye now call Ireland. I will therefore show you Benignus, who, having received the Gospel, was not content to keep it for himself, but laboured through

many days to give it to his own people.

Music, "Ancient of days, Who sittest, throned in glory."
Ancilla opens the window. Benan is seen. He rests on his oar, and, shading his eyes with his other hand, looks intently into the distance.

St. Agnes.— What art thou doing, my little lad?

Benan.— Truly, I am waiting for Patrick. What *should* I be doing, dear lady, seeing that I am his gillie?

St. Agnes.— And where is thy good Bishop?

Benan.— He is up there on the hillside. Ye could see him were't not for the trees. This morning in the Fountain of Loigles he baptized Erc mac Dego and many others, having thrown down their idol with his staff,

and now he is preaching to them ere he leaves to go up the river. Hark! Ye may hear them sing. (He listens a moment.) It is the "Deer Cry":

"At Tara to-day in this awful hour
I call on the blessed Trinity."

Oh, how I wish that I could grow faster! When I am old enough I am to be Patrick's deacon, and then I will help him to win this people from their dark magic arts to Christ. Now I can only help him by rowing his coracle up and down the rivers and lakes. Ye cannot think how I love him! If ye could see the light in the blue eyes of him and the sweetness of his smile and then his zeal for Christ and his tenderness with

the people! Yesterday he called the children about him, and, plucking a shamrock from the bank, he expounded to them the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity.

I was but a child when first I saw my Patrick. He baptized my father at the mouth of the Delvin. Then he took me in his arms and said, "Art thou called Benan? I will call thee Benignus, the kindly one." From that hour I loved him. I clasped his feet in my bosom, I gathered fragrant blossoms and heaped them on his breast as he slept, and when he was departing, as he stepped into the chariot, I caught his leg with my two little hands and would not let him go. Then Patrick said to my parents,

"Lift him into the chariot, for I will baptize him, and he shall be the heir to my kingdom."

So I went with him to Tara, and I saw the fierce chieftains with their purple mantles and collars of gold, and I saw the noble maidens with their golden yellow hair. And when they had their heathen feast, and every fire far and near was extinguished on pain of death, Patrick lit his fire on the Hill of Slane, and defied the spells of the Druids. After that victory, I saw him baptize the King's daughters, Ethne the Fair, and Fedelm the Ruddy, yes, and the Druids who were their teachers. No one can withstand Patrick, because he carries in his heart the love of God.

Joy.— Saint Benan, is it true that Saint Patrick killed all the snakes in Ireland?

Benan.— (stoops and picks up from the grass a dead serpent) See you that? This morning, when the idol stone was thrown down by Patrick, my joy was so great that I ran out and found this snake and killed him! So do I always when an idol is overthrown. When there are no more idols in Erin, I wot it will be hard to find a snake. But see, the service by the Fountain is over; I must loose my coracle from its moorings. Before nightfall we have far to go.

He leaps aside.
Ancilla closes the window.

St. Agnes.— By the labours of such as these was Erin brought into the fold of Christ and its people added to His inheritance. Let us now see how the leaven spread in England. Ancilla, open once more the window, that we may see the Queen who brought the Church into Kent.

Music, "Ten thousand times ten thousand." Ancilla opens the window.
Queen Bertha is seen. She is working with her needle; on a low table beside her is a dish of wild-flowers.

St. Agnes.— Hail, royal daughter of pious Ingoberg!

Queen Bertha.— Who art thou, radiant vision, that comest to grace my bower this summer morn?

St. Agnes.— I am Agnes of Rome, and these are little children of a

Chapel that is called by my name.

Queen Bertha. — Thrice welcome visitors! Be ye welcome, little children! and thou, sweet maiden martyr, I learned thy story at my mother's knee in sunny Gaul. Ye come to me in a happy hour, for to-day I am the Christian Queen of a Christian people.

St. Agnes. — Unfold to us thy happy story, fair Christian Queen.

Queen Bertha. — On Whitsun Eve (three moons have waxed and waned since then) was the Bretwalda, my royal spouse, baptized in mine own little Church of Saint Martin's without the walls of Canterbury. The aged Liudhard wept with joy when he saw the ancient British font

filled once more with crystal water for the mystical washing away of sin. And with my lord were many of his thegns baptized; and every day more people of the Saxons renounce their heathen rites and ask to be received into the Church. But they must perforce wait until the Feast of the Nativity, for Augustine is now absent in Gaul, whither he hath gone to receive consecration from Vergilius, the Archbishop of Arles. When he returns, it is his purpose—in the which may God prosper him — to preach the Gospel to all the Saxon tribes, and especially in Deira, where it seems good Gregory hath certain golden-haired angels whom he would save from wrath and teach to sing Alle-

JUDITH OF THE WILDERNESS

luias. Truly God put it into the heart of the good Bishop of Rome to send his missionaries to the English; for the British Christians hide themselves in the mountains of Wales and Cornwall, and will not even try to teach their hated conquerors. Only it seemeth to me that Augustine is somewhat proud, and that he lacks the wisdom of tenderness and love. And this doth somewhat hurt me, that he should blame me because I did not sooner influence my husband and his people to accept the religion of Christ. Yea, even Gregory doth hint that I might have shown more zeal. But look you, these monks do not understand woman nor her influence.

My comfort is that God doth understand a woman's heart. If one day Canterbury should come to be the beacon light of an English Church, an abiding witness to the White Christ, flashing the truth o'er land and sea, God would remember that I was a Christian wife, and lived in Canterbury a blameless life, and prayed with Luidhard in the little British Church where Ethelbert was baptized.

Ancilla closes the window.

St. Agnes.— Yes, faithful Bertha, thou didst plant, Augustine watered, and God still giveth increase to your English Church. Now look we to the North. There is the Holy Isle from which went forth God's faithful mis-

sionaries. Here let us see young Aidan, who in after years established in Northumbria the sway of Christ.

Music, "Fling out the banner."
Ancilla opens the window.
Aidan is seen sitting on the rocks and mending his nets.

St. Agnes.— What are thy thoughts, O youthful Aidan, when the salt waves break at thy feet and thou mendest thy fishing-net?

Aidan.— Sweet Vision, whatsoe'er thou art, I trust that my thoughts are ever what a monk's should be. Sometimes I exercise them in remembering what I have read of Holy Scripture. More often yet, I do repeat my psalms; for, like Saint Patrick and our own great Abbot, I am minded

to know by heart the entire Psalter. And yet I hold it not a sin if, with the salt spray blowing in my face, I pause to listen to the winds of heaven, for are they not the voice of God, if, as we do believe, He is the Creator of heaven and earth? And so the East wind tells me of those Orient lands where Jesus, our Redeemer, taught the eager crowds about their Heavenly Father's love, and where by the blue waters of Tiberias John sat, as I sit here, a-mending his net, and dreamed not that he should one day catch the souls of men.

Then, when the North wind from Caledonia's highlands chills my bones, I think of those fierce Picts and Scots

to whom Columba preached, defying the spells of the Druids by his triumphant singing of Christian hymns. How I should love to preach to them! I would say, "Fear not the sun and moon! Fear not the shrieking wind and leaping cataract! These are not evil spirits, as the Druids would have you think, but powers held in the firm grasp of God, who is your Father and careth for you."

And then, when the soft West wind caresseth my cheek, I watch the setting sun, and wonder if beyond the Western seas there lie other lands unknown to us, where nations yet unborn shall one day serve our Christ.

St. Agnes.— Ye see, Saint Aidan thought of you.

Aidan.— But the wind that stirs my pulses most is the wind from the South. It tells me of those heathen hordes, the Angles, Jutes, and Saxons, and calls me in long-drawn, wailing notes to come and preach to them.

Faithful.— And wilt thou go, Saint Aidan?

Aidan.— That must be as God wills. But Oswald, the exiled Prince of Northumbria, hath taken refuge with us, and he is my friend. If ever he comes to his rightful throne, he will send for me, and will give me a little island on his coast, like to Iona; there, if it please God,

I will plant the Cross. (He is silent for a while, drawing his wooden needle through the net and knotting the cord, then continues.)

There was a Briton once who sojourned with us for a time, for ye must know that many strangers come to Iona. His name was Cadwallon, and his father, Cadvan, King of Gwynedd. He says these savage English tribes are not worth saving, — that no one could ever make a Christian of an Englishman. He says that Woden and Thunder are better gods for them than the Briton's Christ. Their feasts of horse-flesh here, and hereafter their Valhalla, is all these tawny-haired barbarians can understand.

St. Agnes.— And what sayst thou to Cadwallon's reasoning?

Aidan.— (rising) This say I: I know not what God hath in store for these English tribes, but I do know that the love of Christ constraineth me. He is so good for me, He must be good for all the world. Leave them to Woden and to Thor! Why, there is no Woden and there is no Thor. These are but figments of a barbarous ignorance. If Christ were such airy stuff as this, Britons and Scots might keep Him for themselves; but if Christ be God, then He is God for all the world, and I will take His Gospel to these English folk.

Ancilla closes the window.

Ancilla.— How beautiful are the feet of them which preach the Gospel of peace!

Faithful.— It is good for us that Saint Aïdan did not listen to the advice of Cadwallon.

St. Agnes.— Yes, for how should ye have heard without a preacher?
But we must pass on to other days. England is now Christian, but a cloud of ignorance hath overspread her sky, and in the gloom fantastic shapes have hidden the truth, and the spiritual worship of God is veiled by superstition and self-will. Still, in the deepest gloom there are always earnest souls, and I will show you now a little maid who lived when it was dark and did her best.

Music, "Love divine, all love excelling."
Ancilla opens the window.
A little novice is seen making a garland of flowers.

St. Agnes. — "Thou little maid shut in by nunnery walls," for whom art thou weaving thy bright garland?

The Novice. — I weave my garland for the altar of mine own dear Lord and for no other. It was not always thus, for once I did greatly fear Jesus Christ because He is the Judge of quick and dead, and in the dread day of wrath and mourning He will come with clouds of flaming angels to take account of our sins. And when I thought upon that, my garlands were all for Blessed Mary; for, I said, "She will take pity

on me and shelter me from the wrath of her Son." But now I know something so beautiful that it hath cast out all my fear, and 't is this: God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

St. Agnes. — That is a true saying and worthy of all men to be believed, but who taught it to thee?

The Novice. — It was on this wise: One day they brought to the Convent gate a stranger who had been taken with a fever in yonder hamlet. He had been preaching in all the farms and villages in the country, and it seems that he is one of the

poor priests sent out by a learned Doctor Wiclif of Oxenfoorde. Men do say that his doctrine is most comfortable. So our Abbess took him in, and he was grievously ill for a long time. Then the fever left him and he began to mend; and one day I was left to watch him while the older nuns were saying their office, and when I went to his bedside with a cup of water he said, "Thou little maid, thou hast been weeping: open now to me thy grief." So then I said, "Yestere'en I heard thee and the Lady Abbess talking, and ye did say that we had come upon most grievous times; for the land is wasted by the plague, the friars rob the people, and

the monks oppress them, and the Bishop of Rome is no shepherd to this English fold, but a hungry wolf devouring the sheep. How then should I not weep? If Holy Church be gone astray, to whom shall we go?"

Then said he, "Holy Church hath not gone astray, nor can she, since Christ hath promised to be with her unto the end of the world; but the Church hath lost her lamp, and in the darkness sinful and mistaken men have fastened on her false doctrines and tawdry superstitions. But take courage, little heart; my master, Doctor Wiclif of Oxenfoorde, hath found the lamp, and is now lighting it again. Only let the children of our

English Church be loyal to her and all will soon be well." Then said he, "I will now light a little candle just for thee, and see thou never let it go out." So he taught me the words that banished all my dread. Since then I am so blithe and gay! When the sun shines I say, "God so loved the world"; and when the clouds gather, and the wind moans in the tree-tops and the rain beats on the Convent roof, I say, "Whosoever believeth in Him shall never perish." And now everything that I do is for my Lord, whether I weave my garlands, or tell my beads, or sweep out the cloisters, or gather herbs for the distilling of wholesome medicines. Oh, yes, I believe

in Him, and I shall never perish.

Ancilla closes the window.

St. Agnes. — And now that we have seen the first rift in this cloud, that for a time hid from the Church the dear face of her Lord, let us pass over many storm swept years until we come to one young Prince who loved above all earthly pomp and joy his Mother Church.

Music, "Rise, crowned with light, imperial Salem, rise!"
Ancilla opens the window.
King Edward VI. is seen. He stands by a lecturn on which rests a large Bible. He holds in his hand a prayer-book, at which he looks intently.

St. Agnes. — Fair Prince, I pray thee of thy courtesy tell these children

who thou art, and what is that book which thou regardest with so much love.

The Boy King.— My good children, I am Edward Tudor, by God's Grace King of England. In the reign of my royal Father, the Great Bible (laying his hand on it) was put forth for the enlightenment and comfort of the English people, which Bible I have ordered to be put in all the churches. And now, being guided thereto by God, and helped by the good Bishops and learned Doctors of my realm, I have gathered up from Breviary and Primer, from Procession and Missal, the scattered services of the English Use, and have caused them to be turned from Latin

into a tongue understanded by the people, — to wit, our English speech. This book that here ye see is the Book of Common Prayer, according to the Use of the Church of England, and I will never take it in my hand without devoutly giving thanks to God that He hath holpen me to this achievement. It is the thing that cheereth me in all my troubles, the one bright spot in a somewhat threatening sky. O Church of England, my sweet Mother of Sorrows, thou hast false friends and crafty foes, who would deliver thee again into shameful bondage; but God knoweth that my heart's one and only fealty is thine, and He will give to this weak arm

the strength to shield thee from the Papal Wolf.

Ancilla closes the window.

Innocent.— Saint Agnes, I trust there is no wolf now to harm the fold.

St. Agnes.— The wolf of Edward's day is old and feeble, but there are other wolves in sheeps' clothing, from whom may Christ defend His Church!

Faithful.— If wolves put on the shepherd's raiment, how can we tell that they are wolves?

St. Agnes.— Ye have the Symbol of the Catholic Faith; try them by that. Ancilla, I would have thee open the window again, to let us see a maid who in troubled times prayed for the peace of the Church.

Music, "The Church's one foundation."
Ancilla opens the window.
Lady Mary is seen, seated at her table, which is covered with books and writing materials. She holds a book in her hand.

Lady Mary.— (covering her book with her hand) Lord, we beseech thee to keep thy household the Church in continual godliness, that through thy protection it may be free from all adversities, and devoutly given to serve thee in all good works, to the glory of thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (She lays aside the book.) I have it now and am not like to forget it, since I have resolved within myself that no day shall ever pass from me until I have said this prayer to God, meekly kneel-

ing upon my knees. 'T is strange my tutor should have set me this particular collect to learn by heart to-day. Haply it is God's ordering, since He knoweth whereon my thoughts have lately dwelt. I used to think that the Church had no adversity, seeing that the dolorous days of Queen Mary are safely passed and gone, and the cruel fires of Smithfield burn no more; but since the night His Grace the Archbishop spent at our house together with the Dean of Lincoln, and I heard them talk with my father, I know that the Church still hath need of our prayers. On one side the King of Spain threatens to force on us the yoke of Rome; and the Seminary

Priests creep through the land stirring up dissension, and hatching plots which gather around that baneful lady, Mary, Queen of the Scots. But, even worse than these, it seems that certain busybodies from overseas disturb the Church's peace, and would change her ancient liturgy and usage to suit their own ideas. The Archbishop looked so pale and careworn, and there were tears in his eyes when he said that even the Queen will not always uphold him in his duty. So the Dean of Lincoln took his trembling hand and gently stroked it; and my father spoke comforting words and said that, even as God had set our great Elizabeth upon the throne in the

time of England's greatest need, so, while the Church rocks and tosses on this troubled sea, He has put the helm into the hands of a wise and godly Archbishop, who will steer her safely among the reefs and shoals. Then His Grace smiled hopefully, and said that we must all pray that "God will bless our Church with all prosperous felicity." And so, though I am only a little maid, without much wit or learning, still I will be constant in mine orison, and God's sweet household shall never suffer hurt nor miss His blessing because I faithlessly forgot to pray. (Touches a bell on the table beside her, then speaks to the distance.) Let my Reverend

tutor know that my tasks are finished, and that I await his coming.

Ancilla closes the window.

St. Agnes.— Thus may ye be mindful to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, for they shall prosper who love her. But now we may linger no more in these Isles of the Saints, for the time has come when we must see the Church take sail and cross the Western seas. Let me now show you a joyous maid who welcomed Holy Church to this fair city.

Music, "God save the King."
Ancilla opens the window. Maid Margaret is seen spinning.

St. Agnes.— My merry little maid, why dost thou sing so blithely as thou sittest at thy wheel?

*Maid Margaret.**—I sing because it is the Springtime, and because to-morrow is Sunday. Haply ye know, good friends, that our English church is finished. Oh, it is so good to have our own church! Our Dutch neighbours have been most kind, and have let us hold our services in their own new church in Garden Street, for which courtesy we are most thankful.

Before that, we had our worship in the chapel which was within the Fort, — that is, when there was a chaplain at hand; but it is a very different thing to have our own church and our own Rector.

Trinity Church in the Town

* See "A History of the Parish of Trinity Church in the City of New York," Morgan Dix, S.T.D., D.C.L.

of New York! — hath not that a cheerful sound? Haply ye are strangers and have not seen the church. It standeth very pleasantly upon the banks of Hudson's River, and hath a large cemetery on each side, enclosed in the front by a painted pale fence. Before it a long walk is railed off from the Broadway, which is the pleasantest street of any in the whole town.

Ye must also know that I have a prayer-book of my very own, and I trow that I am the only little maid in the Parish that hath one. My godfather sent it to me from England, and it came in the last packet. See, my name is writ therein, "Margaret Heathcote, a token of affection from her god-

father." My very own! 'T is true I cannot yet find my place, but the Parish Clerk doth instruct me, for so hath Mr. Vesey desired him that he should do.

Oh, it is a good thing for this town and for the colonies that we have established here the English Church. My father says that Mr. Vesey is the right man for this cure, and that he hath many wise plans for the future. For one thing, he will care for the black slaves and for the savages up the River, some of whom dwell within the town, and cause them to be instructed in our holy religion; and for this purpose he desireth to have a Catechist and to open a school, all of which shall be

done in good time, if God please. But the new Governor is not well disposed toward the Church, and he looketh not friendly upon us. However, God ordereth all things, and He will bless our Parish and our Rector. All the world is so fair! The birds are singing in the cool, umbrageous streets, and the lilacs bloom in the gardens. Out in the sparkling bay, white wings of sea-gulls glance in the sunlight. And to-morrow is Sunday, and I go to church and carry my new book. Surely it is no marvel that I sing!

Ancilla closes the window.

Peace. — How sweet to think that lovely girl belonged to our own Parish!

St. Agnes. — Then let me now show you a boy of that same Parish. Methinks that Innocent and Faithful would willingly acquaint themselves with him.

Faithful and Innocent. — Oh, yes, Saint Agnes.

Music, "The Star-spangled Banner." Ancilla opens the window. The American boy is seen, standing in a thoughtful attitude.

St. Agnes. — Good-morrow, my little lad.

*The Boy.** — Good-morrow, sweet lady. I can but return thy greeting, yet I think that if to-day and to-morrow are to be good, they must greatly change from yesterday, or from any day New York hath known since Sir William Howe hath possession of it.

* See "A History of the Parish of Trinity Church in the City of New York," Morgan Dix, S.T.D., D.C.L.

St. Agnes.— Since thou art sad, let us share with thee thy care, for we are thy loving friends, and held to thee by many tender bonds.

The Boy.— Oh, if ye be my friends, I welcome you, and will gladly ease my heart by talking with you, for, to say the truth, I am not over-rich in friends. My mother sleeps in Trinity Churchyard, and my father is with General Washington, I scarce know where. Some say they are still encamped on Harlem's Heights, and others say that yesterday they crossed the river, and are retreating into the Jerseys.

My uncle, in whose care my father left me, is a Tory, and, though he is most kind, yet I know that in his heart he calls

my father a rebel. That is the saddest part of war, when families are divided. My cousins here say that I am no good Churchman because I am an American, and, while I was still in school, my schoolmates said that I was no American because I love the English Church; yet, I pray you believe me, my father and I are both patriots and churchmen. So are thirty-four of those men who, in Philadelphia last July, put their names to the declaration of our independence, and (raising his hat) so is Washington. We love our Country, and, no less, we love our Church, and whatever it takes we shall be loyal to both, and both we will defend with our lives.

That woeful night of the fire there was no Tory lad that fought as hard as I to save the Parish Church, but it was of no use. The wind blew hard from the South, and, even before the flames had spread to the Church, great clouds of burning embers swept across the sky and set fire to the steeple, and no one could reach it. The roof was so steep that even the sailors from the fleet, who helped our citizens to fight the flames, could not climb it, and so Trinity Church perished and is now a heap of ruins. Is it not sad? I shall never see again those winged angels that I loved. I shall never again hear the service in that dear place where I have

so often knelt at my mother's side. Still, we should be thankful that Saint Paul's was saved; and Dr. Auchmuty, our Rector, who hath now returned to the city, said in his sermon on Sunday that we should praise God that we still have a temple left, in which we can perform our devotions according to the liturgy of the Church of England. . . . Yes, but my father says that it is the Church of America as well as the Church of England. The day after the fire we were gathered in Saint Paul's for service. It was the first time that the church had been opened since Mr. Inglis and the vestry closed all our churches for fear that, when the prayers for the King

"WE, BEING MANY, ARE ONE BODY IN CHRIST"

were said, the churches and the people therein might be destroyed. So it was a glad occasion, and the Chaplain of my Lord Admiral preached most grandly, and the prayers for the King's Majesty were said again; but as I sat in my uncle's pew, I was thinking to myself how beautiful it would be if some day we should have a service in Saint Paul's, and Washington should be there, and if I should kneel by my own brave father and pray, not for England's King, save as we pray for all good Christians, but if we should say a prayer for our own dear Country and for the rulers of a free America! Then I remembered that, the night my father left, he came to my bed-

side and took me in his arms, and told me that I must keep a heart of good courage, for, said he, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" And I cannot but think that God is for our Country and for our Church.

Ancilla closes the window.

St. Agnes.— What think you? Hath God been for your Country and your Church?

Joy.— Yes, Saint Agnes, and the little lad was right when he said that our own dear Church is the Church of America, and hath been so from the first coming of Christian people to these shores. As I have read, it was more than three hundred years ago that the

Chaplain of the *Pelican*, at Admiral Drake's command, read the prayers of the Church on the far-away shores of the Pacific, thus planting the standard of the Church in American soil.

Faithful.— Yes, and a few years later, when that brave little company under John Smith landed in the wilderness of Virginia, and their Chaplain, Robert Hunt, gathered those colonists of Jamestown into their rude log sanctuary to praise God for His goodness, and to offer a Holy Eucharist that they had all passed safely through the perils of the deep, the Church took possession of that wilderness for Christ, and this sweet land of liberty re-

ceived Christ's Holy Church for her own true Mother.

St. Agnes.— May God give the American people grace to be always faithful to their own true Mother! And now, my little ones, there is but one link more in this golden chain, and then ye shall see and know that ye yourselves are indeed linked to this same blessed company. Ancilla, tell the children the story of thine earthly life.

Ancilla.— I was born in the year that St. Agnes' Chapel was finished, and in the font where ye have been baptized was I also washed from mine inborn sin, and made a member of this fair company that ye have seen to-night. My home

was near to yours, and I walked to school through the same sunny streets where now ye walk, and played with my companions on the river's banks, as now ye also play. And even as ye are wont to gather in the great church below when the Sunday bells peal forth their sweet invitation, so once I, too, went thither with my parents. I still remember sermons that I heard, and often think on them in Paradise.

I sang my carols with you on Christmas Eve, and knelt with you to worship the new-born King, whose crown I also helped you to make on Ascension Day.* In St. Agnes' Sunday School I learned my

* On Ascension Day the children of Saint Agnes' Chapel have a service during which they make a crown of flowers in honour of the "King of Glory."

Catechism, and then the Bishop laid his hands on me. With many other happy children I made my first communion. Oh, sweet and holy hour! Then at last there came a quiet, peaceful day when I fell into a deep and dreamless sleep, and then awoke. Oh, how to tell of that awakening! Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for those that love Him. Oh, my sweet friends, such joys await you there! Such radiancy of glory! Only be ye not weary in well-doing. Keep in the safe fold of Mother Church, and one day ye shall know for yourselves what Saint Agnes knows

these many years, and what I am learning day by day.

As Ancilla finishes speaking the bell in the Tower above begins to toll for midnight. The children look up and listen. The Two Angels rise and withdraw.

Faithful. — I know which bell is that. It is the bell that calls us to daily prayers. It has around the rim, "The Master is come and calleth for thee."

St. Agnes. — (rising) Yes, the Master is come and calleth for us to leave our sweet communion with each other, and go to our appointed places and to our several tasks. See, even now the spirits of those who have departed hence in the Lord hear His voice, and know it, and obey.

Voices behind the scene begin to sing, "O Paradise" (air by Henry). During the singing of this hymn there passes the procession of the Saints returning to Paradise. First comes the Standard of the Church Catholic, "One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism." Then the Standard of the Church Expectant, "I will walk before God in the Land of the Living." Then all the Saints as seen in The Vision of Saint Agnes' Eve, but now bearing palms of victory. They pass across the stage and down into the main aisle, and, when they are in place, turn and face the stage.

Faithful.— Give unto them eternal rest, O Lord.

Peace.— And let perpetual light shine on them.

Joy.— Make us to be numbered with thy saints in glory everlasting.

Music plays again softly one verse of "O Paradise," and the Angels come in bearing the Veil. They walk to the edge of the stage, and stand holding the Veil between the children and the saints.

Faithful.— (wistfully) A cloud hath received them out of our sight!

St. Agnes.— But ye know that they are beyond the Veil.

The Children.— Oh, yes, Saint Agnes.

St. Agnes.— And now we, too, must join them. Come, Ancilla.

The children gather about Saint Agnes, and cling to her. Peace and Joy weep.

St. Agnes.— What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? Know ye not that this parting is only for a little while, and have ye not been taught that "the tender grace of a day that is dead will surely come back to us

with all its sweetness and with nothing of its pain"? Besides, we need not even now be far apart, for we have only to draw near to Christ, and by that very act we draw near to each other. And then our prayers, do they not hold us close together in a warm and living bond, the Church on earth and the Church at rest remembering each other as we all devoutly kneel before Almighty God?

Faithful.— But how should we pray for the saints, Saint Agnes? We know not what they need.

St. Agnes.— No, ye cannot know what we need in Paradise; and neither do we always know, save as we remember our earthly pilgrimage, what ye have need

of, for this Veil is between us. But as we think of each other we can pray, "Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done." God's will is the highest good for us all, and the coming of His Kingdom is that day divine, "to which the whole creation moves," when we shall all together have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in His eternal and everlasting glory. And now farewell; only be faithful.

The Children.— Farewell, Saint Agnes.

Ancilla.— Fare ye well.

Faithful.— Farewell, Ancilla; do not forget.

Ancilla.— "The kingdom of the dead is a kingdom of remembrance."

I will surely be waiting for thee.

Faithful.— Suppose I should miss the way?

Ancilla.— Thou canst not miss it, for thou hast only to follow in the footsteps of our blessed Lord. He *is* the Way. O Faithful, such joys await thee! (To the children.) Fare ye well.

Saint Agnes and Ancilla pass beyond the Veil, the angelic keepers drawing it aside, and keeping it drawn for a little while after they have passed. The children gaze with rapture after them.
A voice sings (air, "Pilgrims," by Smart):

"'Welcome!' 'Farewell!' How near they come together,
Too sadly near, in this our home below!
Oft in the grief of parting ask we whether
Meeting's brief joy were worth the coming woe.
When in our Father's home
We safely dwell,
Then we no more shall hear 'Welcome!' or 'Farewell!'"

The Angels close the Veil. The children's faces sadden, but they continue to gaze with straining eyes.

Joy. — (mournfully) Now everything will be humdrum again.

Faithful. — Oh, no, dear Joy. I think that nothing will ever be humdrum again after what we have seen this night. Besides, the Veil is not so very thick. I seem to see — nay, I *do* see — Saint Agnes. Look, she smiles on us!

The Children. — (eagerly) Oh, where?

Faithful. — There! Do you not see, as through a mist? Her hand is raised to bless us.

Joy. — Oh, yes; I see her lilies.

Peace. — I see her loving smile.

Innocent. — I see the lamb.

Faithful.— (softly) I see Ancilla.

They continue to gaze through the Veil.

Peace.— (suddenly) Why stand we thus gazing up into the heavens? Let us be up and doing.

Joy.— Yes, let us begin to follow these same blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living.

Faithful.— Why, Joy, we began so to do when we were baptized.

Joy.— Yes, but I never did so with all my might before. Let us make a fresh start to-night.

The Children.— (heartily) Yes, let us make a fresh start.

Peace.— Do thou lead us, Faithful.

Faithful.— Oh, not I; see how lame I am!

Peace.— Yes, but thou hast such good eyes!

Joy. — Suppose the Veil should thicken to us again, 't is thou must see through it for us.

Faithful. — Then I will do my best. Now, since we are soldiers of Christ, let us put ourselves in battle array.

The children stand in a line, Faithful opposite to them.

Faithful. — To what army do we belong?

The Children. — To the Army of the Lord of Hosts, to the Holy Catholic Church.

Faithful. — Ho there, our Standard of the Catholic Church.

Enter the Standard of the Catholic Church, "One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism."

Faithful. — To what division of the army do we now belong?

The Children. — To the Church Militant here in earth.

Faithful.— Ho there, our Standard of the Church Militant.

Enter the Standard of the Church Militant, "Fight the good fight of faith."

Faithful.— To what company of the Church Militant do we belong?

The Children.— To Trinity Parish, and to the Congregation of sweet Saint Agnes.

Faithful.— Ho there, our Parish Standard.

Enter the Standard of Saint Agnes.

Faithful.— What are the enemies that we are pledged to fight?

The Children.— (making the old baptismal sign of renunciation) The World, the Flesh, the Devil. No quarter asked or given.

Faithful.— How shall we prevail against these so pitiless foes?

Enter the Crucifer running.

The Children. — (pointing to the Cross) In this Sign we conquer.

Faithful. — Now, then, Soldiers of Christ, are you ready?

The Children. — Always ready.

Faithful. — Then this be our battle-cry, "For Christ and Holy Church!"

The Children. — For Christ and Holy Church!

The Saints beyond the Veil. — For Christ and Holy Church!

Faithful. — Forward, march!

They form rapidly in line and the recessional begins, first the Saints, then the Angels bearing the thin Veil of separation, then the little company of the Church Militant, all singing together in joyful harmony, "For all the saints, who from their labours rest."

The University Press, Cambridge, U. S. A.

GEN. THEOL. SEMINARY
LIBRARY
NEW YORK

244.7
H651

Hobart, M. E. J.

Vision of St. Agnes

244.7
H651

S0-FSP-579